

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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INR-10 NSAE-00 OC-06 ICA-11 COME-00 BIB-01 PM-05
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C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 6815

DEPT FOR EA, PM AND OC; OSD FOR ISA; JCS FOR J-3;

MANILA FOR RCO/ATO

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, MARR, PEPR, OCOM, AS
SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN TELECOMUNNICATIONS STRIKE; EFFECT UPON
U.S. FACILITIES

1. SUMMARY: AUSTRALIA'S 26-DAY OLD NATIONWIDE TELECOMMUNICATIONS
STRIKE HAS WORSENERED MEASURABLY IN THE LAST 24 HOURS, AND
ALTHOUGH THE GOA HAS BEGUN TO TAKE STEPS TO TRY TO END THE
CRISIS, PRUDENCE DICTATES THAT WE CONSIDER THE IMPACT UPON
JOINT US-AUSTRALIAN DEFENSE FACILITIES AND WHAT WE MIGHT NEED
TO DO TO KEEP THEM OPERATING. END SUMMARY.

2. THE TELECOM STRIKE WORSENERED MEASURABLY ON THURSDAY AND
FRIDQ WITH REJECTION BY THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS WORKERS UNIONS
OF THE (GOA) ARBITRATION COMMISSION'S "PEACE PLAN". THE GOA
HAS PROPOSED A SERIES OF MEETINGS OVER THE WEEKEND TO TRY TO
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END THE STRIKE, AND A MASS MEETING OF TELECOM WORKERS
IS SCHEDULED FOR THIS COMING TUESDAY (29TH) TO DECIDE
WHETHER OR NOT TO ACCEPT THE "PEACE PLAN". IF THIS IS
REJECTED, TELECOM, WITH THE GOA'S FULL BACKING, PLANS
TO APPLY FOR "DEREGISTRATION" OF THE UNIONS NEXT THURSDAY,
AUGUST 31ST. DEREGISTRATION WOULD REMOVE THE LEGAL
PROTECTION UNIONS ENJOY UNDER THIS COUNTRY'S LABOR LEGIS-

LATION, AND WOULD MAKE THEM SUBJECT TO PROSECUTION FOR DECLINING TO RETURN TO WORK. THE UNIONS HAVE DENOUNCED THE GOA'S "GET TOUGH" MEASURES, AND IF THE WORKERS THEMSELVES TURN DOWN THE PACKAGE ON TUESDAY, AUSTRALIA COULD BE IN FOR A VERY BITTER CONFRONTATION. NO AMOUNT OF LEGAL PROCEEDINGS COULD THEN GUARANTEE A RESTORATION OF COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES IN ANY ACCEPTABLE TIME FRAME.

3. IMPACT UPON U.S. FACILITIES: THE GRADUAL WORSENING OF THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS DISPUTE HAS AFFECTED THE JOINT US-AUSTRALIAN DEFENSE FACILITIES. ADOD HAS A TENTATIVE UNDERSTANDING WITH THE UNIONS THAT THE LATTER WILL NOT TRY TO DISRUPT DEFENSE COMMUNICATIONS CIRCUITS, BUT IN THE ABSENCE OF NORMAL MAINTENANCE, THESE ARE GRADUALLY DETERIORATING AND FAULTS AND BREAKDOWNS ARE NOT BEING CORRECTED. SOME MAINTENANCE IS BEING DONE BY SUPERVISORY PERSONNEL, BUT ADOD'S CAPABILITY IS QUITE LIMITED. WOOMERA IS IN THE MOST PRECARIOUS SITUATION; ITS PRIMARY CIRCUITS FAILED A WEEK AGO, AND ALTHOUGH IT HAS IDENTIFIED AN ALTERNATE IN-COUNTCOUTE, IT HAS HAD TO OPERATE FOR MUCH OF THE TIME ON A BACK-UP SATELLITE LINK. IT HAS REQUESTED AIR DEPLOYMENT OF ANOTHER BACK-UP GROUND TERMINAL SHOULD THE ONE IT IS CURRENTLY USING EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTY.

4. USDOD COMMUNICATIONS (DCA) HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH ADOD COMMUNICATIONS (JDC) WHO ARE AWARE OF THE PROBLEMS
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AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THEM. EMBASSY HAS DISCUSSED WITH FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND POLICY LEVELS OF ADOD THE POSSIBILITY THAT WE MIGHT NEED TO ASK THEM URGENTLY FOR PERMISSION TO MOVE EQUIPMENT BY AIR IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN CRITICAL LINKS. BOTH FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND ADOD HAVE REACTED WITH EQUANIMITY; THSQRE PREPARED TO GIVE SPEEDY AND (WE HAVE BEEN TOLD) FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION TO A FORMAL US REQUEST TO BRING IN EQUIPMENT AND TECHNICIANS TO INSTALL IT. THEY UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE CONTEMPLATING USING C-5A AIRCRAFT INTO WOOMERA FOR THIS PURPOSE, AND ALTHOUGH WE MIGHT GO THROUGH ONE OF THOSE AGONIZING "WILL YOU FIX THE RUNWAY IF YOU BREAK IT?" SCENES, THEY LEFT US IN NO DOUBT THAT THEY WOULD APPROVE.

5. EMBASSY LINKS: C&R HAS KEPT OC POSTED VIA DAILY SITREPS, BUT IN GENERAL, WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT WE HAVE AT LEAST ONE RELIABLE (ADOD) MILITARY ALLOCATED CIRCUIT WHICH WILL HOLD UP IN THE EVENT OF A TOTAL BLACKOUT IN AUSTRALIAN CIVILIAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: EARLIEST POSSIBLE NOTIFICATION FROM WASHINGTON OF ANY DECISION THAT WE SHOULD APPROACH

THE GOA WITH A FORMAL REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO BRING
IN SUPPLEMENTARY COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT TO ANY OF THE
JOINT DEFENSE FACILITIES, INCLUDING PERMISSION TO USE
C-5A AIRCRAFT IF THIS SHOULD BE REQUIRED.
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